

Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation

Seattle Board of Park Commissioners
Meeting Minutes
November 3, 2011

Web site: <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/parkboard/>
(Includes agendas and minutes from 2001-present)

Also, view Seattle Channel tapes of meetings, June 12, 2008-most current, at
<http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/watchVideos.asp?program=Parks>

Board of Park Commissioners

Present:

Antoinette Angulo
John Barber
Terry Holme, Chair
Diana Kincaid, Vice-chair
Donna Kostka
Jackie Ramels

Excused:

Jourdan Keith

Seattle Parks and Recreation Staff

Christopher Williams, Acting Superintendent
Sandy Brooks, Park Board Coordinator

This meeting was held at Seattle Park Headquarters, 100 Dexter Avenue North. Commissioner Holme called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and reviewed the meeting agenda. **Commissioner Barber moved approval of the November 3 agenda and the record of correspondence. Commissioner Ramels seconded. The vote was taken and the motion carried.**

Superintendent's Report

Acting Superintendent Williams reported on the following topics in both a verbal and written report available to the Board and audience. To listen to the report, see

<http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/video.asp?ID=5591179> and move cursor to position .45.

National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Meeting: Acting Superintendent Williams recently attend the annual meeting of the NRPA in Atlanta. While there, he talked with many park leaders from across the country and all are facing difficult challenges to keep their facilities open.

Commissioner Holme noted that Acting Superintendent Williams also received a national award at the NRPA conference, the Recognition of Significant Efforts (R.O.S.E.) Award. In addition, he was up at 2:00 am this morning to fly home from Atlanta to attend tonight's meeting and public hearing.

Occupy Seattle: The protestors have moved from Westlake Park to Seattle Central Community College.

Seward Park Jamboree: This was a joint effort by Seattle Parks shops and grounds maintenance crews to direct resources to Seward Park for the purpose of improving the visitor experience. The Department's building closure and maintenance process was applied to outdoor park assets and the main comfort station. Crews

assessed nearly 1,200 items in Seward Park and of these, about 400 required some amount of work. Priority was given to repairs that directly impacted safety and recreational opportunities. Crews were provided color maps and spreadsheets of all the potential work. Using Condition Assessment data collected for additional parks, staff hope to make estimates of deferred maintenance for each park by quantifying the total amount of deferred work related to safety and recreational opportunities. Highlights were that the crews seemed to benefit from the detailed maps and requested work information. Crews also appeared to benefit from the freedom to choose what tasks they would complete. This effort made a significant impact on the deferred maintenance at Seward Park, which now looks great!

Parks Division Update: Dan Johnson has been appointed as the Acting Director of the Parks Division, filling the vacancy that was left by Robb Courtney's departure on October 28. Dan has been with Parks and Recreation for 11 years and with the City for 22 years. He brings to the job a wealth of skills and abilities centered on the value of employees, residents, and visitors to Seattle's park system. Most recently, in 2009 Dan moved to the Parks Division to become the Facility Maintenance Manager and Division Deputy Director. His leadership abilities have truly shown themselves in this position – he has an extraordinary ability to “connect the dots” by thinking through every aspect of every job, and getting the right people to the table to coordinate it.

Council Budget Deliberations Update: Council has completed Round 1 of deliberations and will make final decisions in Round 2, which takes place the week of November 7. So far there are two possible additions to Parks' budget: 1) \$250k to install infrared “people counters” at the entrances to all 26 community centers. People counters were installed at Northgate Community Center this summer and have provided good information about the number of people using the community center by time of day. 2) \$100k of funding to provide extra public community center hours where there is a demonstrated need at a particular center. This amount of funding could provide five extra hours per week at about five community centers or 10 extra hours per week at two community centers during the school year. There is also a change in funding source for the Municipal Energy Efficiency CIP, which does not alter the total amount of funding available. There are no proposed additional cuts to the Mayor's Proposed Parks Budget.

There is a “do pass” staff recommendation for Parks fees and charges legislation, which introduces higher non-resident fees at Amy Yee Tennis Center and raises from 3.25% to 4% the PAR (Participation) fee that ARC pays to Parks on its gross revenues. Also recommended for passage is the legislation that uses Park Levy Inflation funds for major maintenance needs as recommended by the Parks Levy Oversight Committee. Finally, there are two Statements of Legislative Intent (SLIs) to be completed in 2012 at the request of City Council: 1) Parks Long-Term Funding Options and 2) Funding options for arts-related programs at the Department of Parks and Recreation.

Community Center Advisory Council Meetings Status: Parks has held 11 meetings on Community Center operations since October 17, with 15 additional meetings scheduled next week. Approximately 210 people have attended so far. Since the meeting times were pre-scheduled Associated Recreation Council (ARC) meetings, there are many nights that multiple meetings took place. Management staff have generously volunteered to help facilitate these discussions to ensure all are adequately staffed. A World Café format is being used, where citizens have an opportunity to add input to the four questions at four different tables. The questions are “What should we prioritize? What should we keep doing? What should we stop doing? And how can you help?” This format helps take the focus off the budget situation, and directs it to how our stakeholders can help plan for the future. All the notes taken are transcribed and posted on Councilmember Bagshaw's website. Teens, seniors, and special needs populations needs have been highlighted at many of these meetings. Other comments have centered around developing hours that best fit the community's needs; ensuring that hours are not wasted; decreasing summer hours; utilizing volunteers; combining resources; leveraging resources, etc. Suggestions have been all over the board and will all be looked at as staff begin to work on the Public Hours for 2012. The final report will be forwarded to Commissioners.

Youth Green Corps: Seattle Parks and Recreation has partnered with Seattle Goodwill Industries to develop the Youth Green Corps (YGC). The nine-month program consists of 11 Corps members who will split time between

educational and career training at Goodwill Industries and forest restoration and trail work for Seattle Parks. In an effort to address green youth employment and create a pathway into green jobs, Parks will teach site management, restoration skills and management, tool safety, native plant species and invasive plant identification, and environmental stewardship to the participants in the Youth Green Corps while working in Seattle Parks. Goodwill will offer training and classes according to individual needs, such as General Educational Development (GED) test preparation, basic computer skills, reading and writing, and/or English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL). Goodwill will also provide program participants with basic career skills and job search classes. Chukundi Salisbury, Seattle Parks staff, will brief the Commissioners on this program at a future meeting.

Ballard Pool: Ballard Pool's revenues are on track to set a new record for all pools. Staff have their sights set beyond projections and have been working to create and fill classes that are in high demand. In particular, personal lessons are being offered this fall at times that have not been available in the past. Another strong success is the addition of a half hour to the Friday evening lesson block. This has doubled the pool's lesson capacity on Fridays and has proven to be popular with all of the classes more than 90% full.

West Point Odor Concerns: Commissioner Kostka voiced ongoing concern with odors at Discovery Park from the West Point Treatment Center. In response, Acting Superintendent Williams contacted King County Councilmember Larry Phillips and will discuss how the odors can be addressed as part of the negotiations for the Smith Cove property.

Enforcement of the No Smoking Rule: Commissioner Kostka earlier asked how the Department is enforcing its "no smoking policy" at beaches and other areas. Smoking isn't allowed at playgrounds, beaches, athletic fields, or within 25' of other park users. The Department doesn't have a way to enforce the rule and hopes, instead, that peer pressure helps. In addition, King County received a recent health grant from the federal government and some of this money will be used to install 75 signs to discourage smoking in parks. The Board held additional discussion on this during Old/New Business.

Oral Requests and Communication from the Audience

The Chair explained this portion of the agenda is reserved for topics that have not had, or are not scheduled for, a public hearing. Speakers are limited to two-to-three minutes each, will be timed, and are asked to stand at the podium to speak. The Board's usual process is for 10 minutes of testimony to be heard at this time, with additional testimony heard after the regular agenda and just before Old/New Business. One person signed up to testify. <http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/video.asp?ID=5591179> and move cursor to position 15.00.

David Bird: He takes his dog to the Magnuson Park off-leash area and is concerned that the City contracted this site to Magnuson Off-Leash Group (MOLG), rather than Citizens for Off-leash Area (COLA). He believes it would be better to have COLA oversee this off-leash area. He also requested the installation of solar lights so the off-leash can be used later in the day.

Briefing/Public Hearing: Madison Park Fence Removal

David Graves, Seattle Parks Project Planner, briefed the Board on the proposal to remove the shoreline fence at Madison Park. Prior to this meeting, Commissioners received a written briefing, which was also posted to the Park Board's web page and is included below. Immediately following his briefing, the Board held a public hearing. To hear the full briefing and public hearing, see <http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/video.asp?ID=5591179> and move cursor to position 21.00.

Written Briefing

Requested Board Action

- On November 3, Parks staff will present the project background and staff recommendation, and the Board of Park Commissioners (Board) will hold a public hearing on the Madison Park North Beach shoreline fence.

- On December 8, the Board will have the opportunity to deliberate on the matter and make a recommendation to the Superintendent.
- Staff is asking the Board to make a recommendation to the Superintendent as to the disposition of the fence along the shoreline at Madison Park North Beach; i.e. whether or not the fence should be taken down and if so, what if any action(s) should be taken after the fence is removed.
- The issue of the fence along the shoreline has been raised by members of the public several times in the last ten years. As such, it is ripe for a public hearing, with review by the Board of Park Commissioners and a recommendation to the Superintendent.

Staff Recommendation

Parks staff recommends removing the existing fence along the shoreline and all the invasive species growing out of the rip rap along the shoreline.

Project Background

Madison Park “North Beach” is located on Lake Washington, at the intersection of East Lynn Street and 43rd Avenue East. The park is one block north of Madison Park where there is a bath house and swim beach. (See attached vicinity map.) The park is a 490 feet long, 87 feet wide strip of grass between 43rd Avenue and the lake between two 4 – 6 story condominium buildings. The park slopes downward from the sidewalk to the lake and there is a swing set and bench at the northerly end.

The park was developed in 1945 with a small play area, now just a swing set. The rip rap wall and fence along the shoreline were installed during the original park creation. The purpose of the fence was to enclose the playground and keep children out of the water. The fence has remained in place since 1945 although there have been several attempts to have the fence removed.

There is limited on street parking adjacent to the park and neighbors expressed concern over increased traffic and visitors to park if there was lake access. Current use is mainly limited to the immediate neighbors and some visitors to the Madison Park neighborhood. The Madison Park swim beach, play area and tennis courts to the south are much more heavily used.

The most recent attempt at fence removal by Parks was in 2003. The site was posted and a public meeting was scheduled in the community. The meeting was never held and the project was shelved due to the volume of negative comments received. Concerns were raised as to the safety of rocky shoreline if public access was provided to the water. Adjacent condominium owners raised the issue of security if shoreline access was allowed.

Earlier this year, Parks received a request from a Seattle resident to remove the fence at North Beach and open up the access, both visual and physical, to Lake Washington. This request is consistent with the objectives of the City’s Shoreline Master Program (SMP). As stated in Seattle Municipal Code Section 23.60.002B, “[i]t is the purpose of this chapter to implement the policy and provisions of the Shoreline Management Act and the Shoreline Goals and Policies of the Seattle Comprehensive Plan by regulating development of the shorelines of the City in order to:

1. Protect the ecosystems of the shoreline areas;
2. Encourage water-dependent uses;
3. ***Provide for maximum public use and enjoyment of the shorelines of the City***, and
4. ***Preserve, enhance and increase views of the water and access to the water.***

Removing the fence at North Beach would expand the opportunities available to the surrounding neighborhood to access the Lake Washington shoreline consistent with State and local policies.

A diver from the Divers Institute did an underwater inspection of the area off shore of the park in August 2011. The Divers Institute has been doing underwater inspections and cleanup for Parks for a number of years. The diver’s assessment was that there was a nice “sandy” bottom with very little aquatic plant life

immediately adjacent to the shore. Milfoil and other aquatic plants occur offshore. Offshore of the rip rap, the diver did not observe any safety hazards. The elevation change from the top of the rip rap to the water is 4 – 5 feet; the water depth at the face of the rip rap varies with the lake level; currently it is approximately 1 – 2 feet deep. In the summer the depth would be 3 – 4 feet.

Several site photos are included below; additional photos and other shoreline examples are included as a separate attachment.



Seattle Parks and Recreation owns twenty plus miles of shoreline along Lake Washington and Puget Sound, and associated tributaries. These shorelines range from sandy swim beaches to concrete bulkheads to rip rap to steep bluffs, all of which are accessible to the public. With the exception of Carkeek Park where the Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railroad requires fencing to secure its right-of-way, Madison Park North Beach is the only stretch of shoreline where the public is precluded from accessing the shoreline by a chain link fence.

Removal of the fence requires direction and approval from the Superintendent.

Public Involvement Process

The hearing before the Board of Park Commissioners is the first public meeting on the fence removal issue. Parks staff attended the October 3rd meeting of the Madison Park Community Council to outline the public process and encourage the attendees to come to the public hearing before the Board and/or submit comments to the Board in advance of the hearing on November 3rd. The site was posted; notices of the process and Park Board meetings were mailed to residents within ½ mile of the site and distributed electronically.

Issue

The central issue is whether the fence along the shoreline at the Madison Park North Beach Park should be removed. To date, public comments have been split; some favor fence removal and others think the fence should remain. The following are the major themes from the comments:

- The shoreline is dangerous; park users will fall in the water if the fence is removed;
- Soccer balls, Frisbees, and other sporting equipment will be lost in the lake if the fence is removed;
- Removing the fence will make the area more attractive to members of the general public; they will come to the park and bring the associated noise and parking issues;
- The fence precludes the public from accessing Lake Washington, both visibly and physically.

Environmental Sustainability

Opening up the shoreline would provide the public with direct physical and visual access to Lake Washington. Future project(s) could also make improvements to the shoreline to benefit fish and people.

Budget

Removal of the fence and invasive species could be done by the Conservation Corps, using Parks general maintenance budget. The work could be accomplished for approximately \$15,000.

Schedule

Fence removal could be scheduled for as early as mid to late December, or removal could be scheduled after the completion of additional planning work with the public.

Additional Information

If you any questions regarding Madison Park North Beach, contact David Graves at 684-7048 or e-mail to david.graves@seattle.gov.

The Madison Park North Beach website is (note that the website is in the process of being updated): http://seattle.gov/parks/park_detail.asp?ID=4441

Discussion

Acting Superintendent Williams began the discussion and addressed the mission of Seattle Parks: be a good neighbor, provide broad public access, and manage risk. He stressed that no decision has been made; the Department is looking to the Board of Park Commissioners and to public input for creative ideas.

Mr. Graves introduced himself and invited Commissioners to tour the park site. He noted the fence is located next to Lake Washington, reviewed the public notification process, and showed a 15-slide Powerpoint presentation. The City's shoreline policy is to provide the maximum use of shorelines. He reviewed information from a water depth survey taken in August 2011 where divers found that, 15' from the rip rap shoreline, the water depth was 4'. In winter the depth is 2'. He showed a number of photos of the park from different sightlines, then showed photos of other waterfront parks. He noted that Seacrest Park has an elevation change of 10-15', Myrtle Edwards Park has large logs along the water's edge, and Seward Park has a combination of rip rap and vegetation on its shoreline.

Commissioner Barber asked if there are other playgrounds near the waterfront and if they are fenced. Mr. Graves answered that Myrtle Edwards has a playground, which isn't fenced. Responding to a question from Commissioner Kincaid whether there are safety issues at rip rap shorelines, Mr. Graves answered none that come to mind.

Public Hearing

Commissioner Holme explained the role of the Board of Park Commissioners, which is advisory to the Superintendent. The Board is made up of volunteers who listen to the Department and the public and make a recommendation. Along with listening to testimony at tonight's public hearing, the Board will continue accepting written testimony through Friday, December 2. Commissioners plan to discuss the fence at the December 8 meeting and make a recommendation to the Superintendent. Written instructions for submitting testimony are on the agenda table.

The public hearing began. Commissioner Holme instructed speakers they have up to two minutes to speak and should come to the podium. In the interest of time, if another speaker has already voiced the speaker's sentiments, please state agreement with those, rather than repeating the same message. Thirty five people testified. A very brief summary of testimony is included below.

Jean Viereck: Opposed to removing fence. Madison Park resident for 53 years. The community and Seattle Parks have worked together on many projects over the years; however, the community was surprised at this proposal. The community first heard of it when a sign was posted at the Madison Park Community Council meeting stating Mr. Graves would speak that night on the fence removal.

Sam Smith: Opposed. Madison Park resident for 20 years. He was also surprised at the lack of notice. Attendees at the Madison Park Community Council meeting were told the fence would be removed, with no plan to improve the area. This is a safety concern and the City will be responsible if anyone is hurt as a result. He asked that Parks hold a dialogue with the community before making a decision.

Alice Lanczos: Opposed. Madison Park resident for 40 years. The process should have involved the community at the beginning and asked for its ideas. The presentation at the community council meeting was poorly delivered and has riled the community. Some neighborhood people want the fence removed, but most don't.

Mark Hutcheson: Opposed. He lives on 43rd Avenue across from the park. Mr. Graves stated the view would be improved if the fence and blackberry vines are removed. He feels Mr. Graves mind is already made up. He himself has safety concerns about the removal and noted that the SR520 bridge causes strong currents in the area. He asked if an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is required for the fence removal.

David Trost: Opposed. Madison Park resident since 1960. The fence has been there all that time and helps keep traffic at the park down except in the summer. He sees small kids there playing soccer and learning from adults. The much larger Madison Park Beach is just to the south of the fenced area.

Ruby Smith: Opposed. Madison Park resident for 8 years and her family has lived there 35 years. The proposal to remove the fence is very dangerous as many kids play at this park and there are huge rocks on the shoreline. Only two blocks away there is a 6.2-acre park with a kayak launch area. She agrees that Seattle's parks are for everyone, but she is concerned with safety and cost. It has been difficult to even get small problems fixed at this park and she is shocked that the Department would spend millions to remove the fence and vegetation and convert the shoreline into a beach area.

Sandra Esaskow: Opposed. Nearby condo owner for 5 years. Madison Park needs both active and passive park areas and is fortunate to have passive use at this small park. She asked the Board to respect the "Swingset Park" and the fact that both passive and active uses are available on the waterfront.

John Hansen: Opposed. Lives in Canterbury Shores condos. Moms bring their kids to the park because it is fenced and they can't unexpectedly run into the water. Removing the fence will result in it being underused and would take an amenity from the neighborhood.

Solveig Thomson: Opposed. She believes this has been a bad public process and Mr. Graves has already made up his mind, as he stated the fence could be taken down as early as mid-December. Patrick Doherty, who

recently proposed the fence be removed, says the shoreline should be open for all to use. She believes the Department should have a plan for the area before the fence is removed.

Catherine Heffernan: Opposed. Madison Park resident entire life and her mom was a member of the Board of Park Commissioners. The fence should remain. She believes there are many utilities involved at the site and there are legal and historical issues that must be investigated before a decision is made. She wonders if the fence was legally grandfathered into the park. She noted that the fence protects people from the Capitol Hill sewer runoff during heavy rains which drains into Lake Washington.

Terry Wean: Opposed: Lives ½ block from park. Traffic is already bad near the park and he is concerned it will increase.

Dave Klokoflou: Opposed. No one will use the park if the fence is removed.

Edward Clark: Supports fence removal. Madison Park resident for 20 years. He believes the safety issue is overstated, as the City has 25 miles of shoreline parkland that isn't fenced. This is bogus and those opposed don't want others to use the park. Parking concerns are legitimate and passive uses vs. active uses are legitimate, but safety concerns is a pathetic argument.

Sonja Richter: Supports removing both the fence and invasives. The fence is inconsistent with the City's shoreline plan. She believes the community is afraid of change.

Joe Quintona: Opposed. The community is divided on this issue with most in opposition. This is a democracy and the Parks Department needs all the friends it can get.

Bill Romischer: Opposed. Madison Park resident and lives right across from the park. He has observed people drinking and partying in the park at 3:00 am. He is concerned that both they and little kids playing at the park during the day may fall and be hurt on the rip rap.

Gail Irving: Opposed. She is president of the Madison Park Community Council President. This is one of four portions of the Madison Beach Park and many City departments have jurisdiction over this property. Safety is a huge concern at this small park. The Community Council received a Department of Neighborhoods Small and Simple Fund award, then lost it when Parks couldn't do the work. Why does the Department now want to disassemble the children's play area?

Bill Franklin: Opposed. There is a very popular Madison Park Beach located just to the south. Why not ask the community the pros and cons of removing the fence. He read that the park is used mostly by locals; however, he questioned a number of park visitors and found they are from other areas. The Parks Department's budget is tight, so why rush into this if it doesn't have funds to improve the area once the fence is removed?

Patrick Doherty: Supports. Born in Madison Park. The City's shoreline is a valuable resource for all – it is the most expensive property on the waterfront. He believes that each piece of public shoreline should be maximized. This area is like many miles of the City's shoreline and isn't unique. Visitors to the park cannot see Lake Washington because of the fence and vegetation. He urged that the park be made accessible to all.

Doug Sneddon: Opposed. He understands that Seattle Parks has no money and the City often doesn't maintain the facilities it has. Parks should listen to the people who say leave the fence. The vegetation should be removed.

Richard Leman: Opposed. Madison Park resident most of life. The fence helps with safety. He voiced concerns that if the fence is removed large boats would start anchoring just outside the park and dropping off passengers.

Lucy Smith: Supports. Lives in Ballard near Golden Gardens. She noted that Golden Gardens is a busy park with lots of traffic. She wants the City's waterfront areas accessible to all. This is an opportunity to remove the fence and make it a beautiful spot.

Brad Augustine: Opposed. Third generation Madison Park resident. This is a nursery park with small kids playing soccer who come from all over to play at the park. He suggests removing only the blackberries, as a swim beach isn't needed at this park.

Andy Dyan: Supports. Madison Park resident since 1998. He has three kids and the safety concerns are overblown. He is disappointed and astonished at the testimony. This is a horrific abomination. He is hearing "not in my back yard" and exclusivity being voiced. He stated there is lots of land poached by neighbors (encroachments) that belongs to the public. Keeping this park fenced is also poaching public land.

Charlie Pelly: Opposed. He asked that neither the fence or blackberries be removed and believes the more vegetation, the better. Backwash comes in from the SR 520 bridge area and meets the south wind, making the water very unsafe. People should not swim or paddleboard in the area. If the fence is removed, his five grandchildren will no longer be allowed to play at the park.

Eleanor (no last name): Opposed. Long-time Madison Park resident. She noted that the photos shown by Mr. Graves of waterfront park property with rip rap and no fences were not located in residential areas. In addition, if the fence is taken down she suggested that Parks install a wrought iron fence with safety signs regarding swimming, and beautify the area.

Kenan Block: Supports. Lives one block from park for past six years. He takes safety concerns seriously; however there are fenceless waterfront parks that work all over the city. His parents both served on the Board of Park Commissioners in the 1960s. Great public spaces are part of what makes democracy work. He recommends maximizing the area and opening it to Lake Washington. He asked the neighbors to work together with the Board and help to improve and beautify the park.

Carol Wright: Opposed. This park is a "dead end". Those who live in the area already know that Madison Park is already heavily used on summer days. She stated she is very emotional about this issue.

Louis Hoffer: Opposed. Madison Park resident for 26 years. He is concerned with wave action from SR520 and the wind. There are also health risks in the water, as raw sewage drain into Lake Washington from this park during heavy rains.

Bert Philipps: Opposed. He believes real estate values will decrease if this park is used by more people.

Deidre Pierson: Opposed. Lives 1-1/2 blocks from the park. She moved from another area in Seattle where her car was vandalized, dog poop wasn't picked up, etc. This is an exclusive neighborhood and homeowners pay high property taxes. Don't invite people in who may not respect the community.

Robert Leventhal: Opposed. He is concerned there isn't a plan for what will happen when the fence is removed.

Selena Carsiotis: Opposed to removing the fence unless it is replaced with a new fence and gate that is always unlocked. She lives in the North Beach area and looked at the fence today. There isn't good access to the water at this site and it's a problem getting from the water to the beach.

Ann Greeley: Stated she isn't necessarily opposed. She was born in the Madison Park area. She asked that safety be considered. She kayaks in the area and the water is very choppy. She has observed park users going in the water to retrieve balls, Frisbees, etc., and it is difficult for them to get back onshore.

John Nuler: Supports. He lives in West Seattle and asked that the City keep the public waterways accessible to all and unfenced. Other waterfront areas have similar conditions and aren't fenced. He doesn't understand why Madison Park residents don't want the invasive blackberries removed, as they harbor rats and other rodents.

The public hearing concluded at 8:45 pm. Written testimony will be accepted through Friday, December 2, sent via the Board's coordinator, sandy.brooks@seattle.gov. Commissioners will discuss the fence at the December 8 meeting and vote on a recommendation to Acting Superintendent Williams.

Additional Discussion

Discussion/Recommendation: South Lake Union Neighborhood Temporary Off-Leash Area

At the Board's October 13 meeting, Brenda Kramer, Seattle Parks Strategic Advisor, presented a briefing on a proposed temporary off-leash area for the South Lake Union area. To hear the briefing and public hearing, see <http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/video.asp?ID=5591176>. Tonight Commissioners are asked to discuss the proposal and vote on a recommendation to Acting Superintendent Williams.

To aid Commissioners in their discussion, Parks staff prepared a decision agenda, included below. To hear tonight's discussion and recommendation, see <http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/video.asp?ID=5998> and move cursor to position 21.00.

Written Information – Decision Agenda

Requested Board Action

Staff is requesting a recommendation from the Board regarding a temporary off-leash area in the South Lake Union neighborhood. A briefing paper on this subject was presented to the Board at the October 13 Board meeting. This paper takes the Board through three questions regarding locating a South Lake Union neighborhood off-leash area

- Should an off-leash area should be located in South Lake Union on Park property?
- If yes, at which of three potential Parks locations?
- And, if yes, what conditions, if any, should be imposed on the project?

Background

The 2004 North Downtown Park Plan, which includes the South Lake Union neighborhood, projects 11,000 new housing units and 23,000 new jobs by 2025. There has been significant growth subsequent to the 2004 plan which, in turn, has led to expanding demand for dog off-leash areas. Amazon, which leases building space from Vulcan Real Estate in the South Lake Union neighborhood, has a policy that allows employees to bring their dogs to work; currently this equates to 300 dogs per day. In addition, the majority of condominiums and apartment buildings in South Lake Union are pet friendly, and currently account for approximately 613 additional dogs. An estimated 913 dogs now reside in or "go to work" in South Lake Union.

Currently, there are no off-leash sites in the North Downtown area. Off-leash sites approximately one-half mile from the neighborhood include: Denny Regrade in Belltown, Plymouth Pillars Park on Boren and Pine, and I-5 Colonnade, which is northeast of South Lake Union under the I-5 freeway.

1. Should an off-leash area be located on Park property in the South Lake Union Neighborhood on Park property?

Pros:

- The North Downtown Plan recommends the addition of off-leash areas;
- There are currently over 900 dogs working and/or living in the neighborhood and dog owners want to exercise their pets off-leash within walking distance;

- More people continue to move into and surrounding the neighborhood which means more dogs; locating an off-leash dog area in South Lake Union will help prevent overcrowding in the other surrounding off-leash dog areas;
- The dogs are here and will stay; and
- Concentrating dog activity in one area of a park helps keep the rest of a park cleaner.

Cons:

- There is limited park land in the neighborhood;
- Lake Union Park has been removed from the list due to myriad environmental issues;
- Cascade neighbors want Cascade Park to remain a neighborhood park without an off-leash area; and
- Denny Park is a historic park with limited space.

2. Location Options

Denny Park

Fence a portion of Denny Park in the north center section (.105 acres) of the 4.63 acre park. Cost estimate for design, construction, overhead, permits and taxes is approximately \$80,000.

Pros:

- Convenient site for businesses and residential community;
- Increased park safety after business hours;
- The park has lighting;
- The recommended area has only one small tree which could be relocated;
- Park provides a nice buffer from residences and busy streets; and
- Denny family supports the idea.

Cons:

- Denny is the City's oldest park, created in 1883;
- The park is Olmsted influenced;
- Some people want it to be passive use only; and
- The recommended area is near a playground.

Cascade Park

Fence a portion of Cascade Park in the southwest corner of the grassy playfield (.209 acres) of the 2.03 acre park. Cost estimate is comparable to Denny Park at approximately \$80,000.

Pros:

- Convenient location for business and residential community;
- Traffic volume is low; and
- Easy to fence to separate dog area from playground and community garden.

Cons:

- Annual community events and kickball would need to be re-located;
- Neighborhood activities would be minimized;
- Decreases passive use;
- Neighbors want Cascade to be a neighborhood park, and are opposed to ceding any of the park for an off-leash area; and
- Area is near a community garden and a playground.

Lake Union Park – Parks is no longer considering this location due to environmental concerns.

Open the entire Lake Union Park (11.75 acres) for off-leash use during designated hours in the morning and afternoon. There would not be any fencing.

Pros:

- Convenient location to South Lake Union businesses and residences.

Cons:

- Heavy trafficked arterials;
- Plant establishment destruction;
- Model boat pond and fountains may not be operable;
- Dog feces entering Lake Union;
- Pedestrian and bicycle pathway conflicts; and
- Negative impact on maintenance staff and budget.

Possible Conditions

The Board may want to recommend conditions for a new off-leash area in the South Lake Union neighborhood. One condition could be that the new off-leash area is a pilot project, to be evaluated after a period of time.

Additional Information

Brenda Kramer: Brenda.kramer@seattle.gov ; 386-9094

Board Discussion and Recommendation

Commissioner Holme referred to a suggestion that the Board postpone its decision. However, he requests the Board to move ahead this evening and vote on a recommendation to Acting Superintendent Williams.

Ms. Kramer introduced herself and gave a brief overview of the proposal for a new off-leash area in the South Lake Union neighborhood. The Board held a public hearing on October 13 and accepted written testimony through Friday, October 28. A total of 41 people submitted testimony, with 33 in support of a new OLA in the area; one opposed to all sites; and seven opposed to a specific park site.

Acting Superintendent Williams stated that 100 years ago parks were used differently. The Department must adapt to changing uses and be flexible, while valuing the Olmsted vision. In the past few years, the South Lake Union area has become densely populated.

Ms. Kramer next reviewed the decision agenda and Commissioner Holme opened the floor to questions from commissioner, which are grouped. Ms. Kramer/Acting Superintendent Williams' responses are shown in italics.

Commissioner Kostka:

Explain the budget for each site and source of the funds.

- *South Lake Union Park has been eliminated from consideration.*
- *Denny Park estimate is \$60-80k to construct, including permits, taxes, and administrative staff costs. This would include removing grass and grading the area.*
- *Cascade Playground estimate is \$80-105k. It is twice the size of Denny Park.*

Vulcan Enterprises will provide \$50k for installation. Amazon will provide \$15k each year for three consecutive years to be used for maintenance costs. Sponsors of the OLA will also apply for Neighborhood Matching Funds and work with Parks' landscape architects to reduce the installation cost. Wood chips are less expensive than pea gravel [which was suggested at the October 13 meeting for use at Denny Park, if selected.] Acting Superintendent Williams listed other options for cutting costs: value engineering, using a lower quality of material, and going back to Vulcan or Amazon for additional funding.

Commissioner Holme:

Urged Parks to pare the total cost of installation to \$50k and asked about annual maintenance costs. *An estimate is \$10-40k per year, according to the size of the OLA.*

Commissioner Ramels:

Amazon's work policy allows employees to bring their dogs to work. Is this driving the need for this off-leash area?

Amazon staff bring about 300 dogs to work; however, another 600 dogs live in the nearby condos, with more moving into the area all the time. This has become the new reality for the neighborhood and part of the mission of the Parks Department is to provide places to recreate and play.

Commissioner Barber:

Commissioners are hearing that the site will be temporary, but there is no assurance it will be. (1) Are Vulcan and Amazon clear they are providing funding for a temporary site only; and (2) Will City Light give a firm commitment that the former Greyhound site will include the permanent off-leash area? If there isn't a firm future site, how can this be considered temporary?

(1) Vulcan and Amazon do understand the site is temporary; and (2) there is not yet a firm commitment for the Greyhound bus site as a future off-leash area. The Superintendent determines whether the new off-leash area is temporary or permanent. A clause stating that the site is temporary and must be restored to its original state could be added to the Board's recommendation.

He is concerned about damage to the large trees in Denny Park. Has the City's arborist evaluated tree roots at other off-leash areas for damage?

There is no known tree damage from Seattle Parks' off-leash areas.

Commissioner Kincaid:

Asked who will pay restoration costs at the temporary site. *This is unknown at this time.*

Are Vulcan/Amazon willing to provide land for a future off-leash area as the dog population increases? Will this one off-leash area be adequate for the growing dog population? *Downtown off-leash areas are traditionally small ones.*

The new OLA will most likely have high usage. How will it be kept sanitary? *Citizens for Off-leash Areas (COLA) and their volunteer work parties will do regular cleanings. The existing irrigation system will be tapped into and the water used to help flush the OLA. COLA's presence and oversight helps influence positive cleanup and other behaviors at the off-leash areas.*

Commissioner Ramels:

Why is the area at Denny Park only 1.05 acres? *This small area will keep the off-leash area away from busy arterials like Dexter and Denny, as it would be located adjacent to a fairly quiet street (John Street), with easy access from the street.*

Why was South Lake Union Park taken out of consideration? *Parks heard support for this site only if the park is fenced, which isn't feasible.*

Commissioner Ramels moved that the Board support an off-leash area at Cascade Playground. Motion died for lack of a second.

Commissioner Ramels moved that the Board support an off-leash area at Denny Park. Commissioner Angulo seconded.

Discussion

Commissioner Ramels stated the Board received articulate testimony, especially from a landscape architect who has designed off-leash areas. This is a good opportunity to develop a partnership with Vulcan, Amazon, the Department, and community. It is incumbent for the Department to serve people and, if the Department doesn't build an off-leash at Denny Park, where will the owners and their dogs go for recreation? She supports keeping the OLA as long as Amazon pays for the annual maintenance. Commissioner Holme asked if conditions will apply if Commissioners support a temporary off-leash at Denny Park. Commissioner Ramels agreed.

Commissioner Barber stated he “dog tested” both parks and walks his dogs in many of Seattle’s parks. He is concerned with breaking up a small, precious park and what this says to the urban parks being a green haven. Dog owners can still walk their dogs at Denny Park, without an off-leash area.

Commissioner Kincaid is torn on this issue, as she sees the desire of dog owners for an off-leash area in South Lake Union. On the other hand, Denny Park is historic and that is also valuable. But, it needs to be better activated and an off-leash would bring more people to the park. She is pleased the City’s arborist has stated off-leash areas have not damaged the roots of any of the city’s tree roots.

Commissioner Ramels noted the area around Denny Park is becoming one of the most populous areas in the city and Denny Park has been known for illegal sexual behaviors. When an off-leash area was added to Regrade Park in Belltown, it made a very positive difference in that park’s use.

Commissioner Angulo believes this is a great opportunity for the Board to support the evolution of Denny Park to activate and make it more vibrant, and the off-leash area can help build community. She was very pleased that so many in the neighborhood came out to voice support for the new off-leash. This will be a good partnership and she will vote to support it, with conditions.

Commissioner Kostka urged the Department to wait until a permanent off-leash area has been found. It is presumptive of Amazon to encourage its employees to bring their dogs to the area without planning for future needs. She also believes Denny Park is too small to accommodate an off-leash area, there is no assurance a permanent site is forthcoming, and the budget is questionable.

Commissioner Barber agrees with Commissioner Kostka. He also believes there is a high concentration of pathogens (bacteria, etc.) present at off-leash areas and that many people drive their cars to off-leash areas. The primary goal of parks is to provide recreation for people. He is sympathetic to the need for an off-leash area, but wants a permanent site to be identified, rather than building a temporary one in Denny Park.

Ms. Kramer addressed these concerns: she has talked to the Seattle City Light’s project manager and the plans are to build the substation in one corner which could allow space for an off-leash area; Parks has some acquisition funds that could possibly be used to purchase a permanent site; the City calls for off-leash areas to be developed; nearby condo owners are more “green” and many will walk their dogs to the new off-leash area; and Parks is trying to respond to a community need.

Commissioner Kincaid believes most people using the new off-leash area would live nearby and not be driving to it. However, she has observed that many people with dogs don’t respect the leash laws and allow their dogs to run free in the parks. Denny Park is small and if an off-leash is established, dog owners must respect the boundaries.

The vote was taken with Commissioners Angulo, Kincaid, and Ramels in favor. Commissioners Barber and Kostka opposed. The chair only votes to make or break a tie and did not vote. Motion carried.

Next, Commissioners stated conditions for the use of Denny Park as the site of a temporary off-leash area:

- Commissioner Kostka: the cost of construction, operation, and maintenance must come from outside public funds.
- Commissioner Ramels: Establish evaluation criteria and remove the off-leash after the three years of maintenance funding has expired.
- Commissioner Holme: The off-leash area must be removed after three years. Acting Superintendent Williams stated it will be established as permanently temporary. Parks staff will come back before the Board in nine months to update the Board.
- Commissioner Barber: This must be a firm pilot with designated timeframe. A permanent site must be located and, when it is, the temporary one removed.

- Commissioner Kincaid: the cost of the restoration should be paid for from non-Park budget sources. The rest of Denny Park must be protected and dog owners respect the rest of the park.
- Commissioner Angulo: COLA should provide stewardship of the new off-leash area at Denny Park.

Commissioner Barber moved that the Board recommend approval of these conditions to Acting Superintendent Williams. Commissioner Ramels seconded. The vote was taken and unanimous in favor. Motion carried.

Commissioner Holme thanked Ms. Kramer and the public for its interest in this issue.

Old/New Business

To hear the Board’s discussion of Old/New Business see <http://www.seattlechannel.org/videos/video.asp?ID=5998> and move cursor to position 80.00.

Enforcing Smoking Ban in Seattle’s Parks: Acting Superintendent gave additional information to Commissioner Kostka’s concerns with enforcement of the Department’s no smoking policy at parks. She understands that cigarette butts are the most common source of litter on beaches and near swimming areas and asked if Parks would consider installing receptacles where the butts could be discarded. Acting Superintendent Williams responded the Department has a park rule that smoking isn’t allowed at beaches. If receptacles are installed, it gives silent, tacit approval that it is okay to do so. Commissioner Holme added that public education is the key to helping solve this problem. He is pleased that the Department will have funds from King County to install 75 no smoking signs.

There being no other new business, the meeting adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

APPROVED: _____
 Terry Holme, Chair
 Board of Park Commissioners

DATE _____